

request reconsideration of Claims 1-23, consideration of Claim 24 and submit that all of said claims are in condition for allowance.

It is noted with appreciation that Claims 8-13 are allowed. Additionally, Claims 2-6, 15, 16, 20 and 21 are indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form. In accord therewith, Claim 2 is rewritten in independent form such that Claims 2-5 are allowable. Also, Claims 6, 15 and 16 are rewritten in independent form while added Claim 24 is directed to the subject matter of allowable Claim 20. Claims 2, 6 and 24 are modified, for example, to eliminate the reference to a "furniture frame" which modifications are not believed to affect the allowability of these claims. As such, all of Claims 2-6, 8-13, 15, 16 and 24 are in condition for allowance.

As for remaining Claims 1, 7, 14 and 17-23, these claims are believed patentably distinguishable from the prior art of record as discussed in further detail herein.

In particular, independent Claim 1 is rejected as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5 038 539 (Kelley et al). Applicants, however, respectfully submit that Kelley does not disclose, teach or suggest a glass pane which fits tight fittingly within a fixing channel defined by opposite channel walls.

More particularly, Kelley discloses in Column 15, lines 9-15, that means are provided to prevent lateral movement of the glass pane within the channels 298 defined within the stiles 288. The patent disclosure references "rattling" of the pane within the stiles and that the means for preventing lateral movement prevents such movement and rattling. Column 15, lines 30-40 contains similar disclosure relative to the upper and lower rails 290 and 292 and in effect teaches that the engagement of the pane with the rails still permits rattling unless additional means are provided to prevent such

rattling. These passages therefore are believed to specifically disclose that the cooperation of the pane within the rigid structure of the stiles 288 and rails 290 and 292 is loose, hence requiring additional means to prevent movement of the glass pane. This arrangement distinctly differs from Applicants' claimed invention.

More particularly, Claim 1 defines a fixing channel having opposite channel walls which are spaced apart to define a channel opening that is narrower than the thickness of the claimed glass pane. The channel walls extend parallel to the opposite glass faces and are formed of a rigid material which defines opposing interior wall surfaces that are rigid and contact the opposite glass faces. At least one of the channel walls is resiliently deflectable wherein the rigidity of the interior wall surfaces permits one of the channel walls to be deflected by the respective glass edge inserted in the channel opening. Accordingly, an engagement of the glass edge with the fixing channel has the glass edge in tight-fitting contact with the deflectable channel wall and the other channel wall.

As referenced above, no such deflection of a channel wall occurs in the Kelley patent since the glass pane fits loosely within the channel. Noticeably, the opening between the legs 294 and 296 is wider than the glass pane, thus differing from Applicants' claimed arrangement. Further, while an argument is made that the material could be deflectable, Kelley is not believed to disclose a channel wall which is able to be deflected by insertion of a glass pane therein. Rather, the structure of the stiles 288 is believed to be thick and massive so as to prevent deflection of the channel walls by the glass pane. In this regard, the inwardly-extending leg 294 of Kelley has a thickness which progressively increases outwardly to a thickness multiple times the thickness of the glass pane. It is believed apparent that this leg 294 would not deflect upon insertion of the glass pane. The additional

leg 296 also is believed relatively thick and would not deflect upon insertion of the glass pane. Furthermore, as already referenced above, such deflection does not occur since only a loose fit is defined therebetween.

Accordingly, Claim 1 is believed to be patentably distinguishable from Kelley and the remaining prior art of record. For this reason alone, Claim 7 also should be allowed.

As for Claim 14, this claim is rejected as being obvious over Kelley but is believed to be distinguishable from Kelley. Specifically, Kelley does not disclose, teach or suggest channel walls with opposing interior wall surfaces that are normally spaced apart a distance less than the thickness of the glass.

More particularly, Kelley discloses that the glass panes are fit loosely within the channels 298 since means for preventing lateral movement are required within the channels. Such means are separate from the channel walls themselves and may be foam strips or pressure-sensitive adhesive. The disclosure of Kelley therefore specifically teaches that tight fitting engagement does not occur between the channel walls thereof and the glass pane but instead additional means are required.

Claim 14, however, requires that the spacing between the interior wall surfaces be less than the thickness of the glass so that the glass itself effects outward deflection of a channel wall upon insertion into the fixing channel. Claim 14 further defines that the interior wall surfaces are rigid such that contact with the glass causes the interior wall surfaces to deflect. Kelley, however, uses flexible means such as the foam strips or the adhesive to prevent rattling of the glass pane. This is distinctly different from Applicants' claimed arrangement. As such, Claims 14, 17 and 18 are believed allowable.

As for Claim 19, this claim is rejected as being anticipated by Kelley, but all of the features thereof are not believed to be disclosed, taught or suggested by the Kelley patent. In particular, Claim 19 defines that the channel walls have opposing interior wall surfaces which face toward and abut against both of the opposite glass faces. Furthermore, coating is provided on at least one of the interior wall surfaces which coating is shearable by the glass edge upon insertion into the fixing channel such that the coating conforms to a shape of the glass face and the channel walls are in gripping contact with the glass edge. Kelley does not disclose this arrangement.

More particularly, the frame rail members of Kelley do not include opposite side walls which are in gripping contact with the opposite faces of a sheet of glass. As specifically disclosed in Kelley, the stiles 288 and the upper and lower rails 290 and 292 are provided with means to restrict lateral movement of the edges of the glass pane within the respective grooves. These means for preventing lateral movement may be foam strips or pressure-sensitive adhesive. However, in the absence of these movement preventing means, Kelley specifically discloses that the glass panes would move and rattle within the channels which thereby indicates that the channel walls do not grip the glass pane therein. To the contrary, the additional foam strips, adhesive, or the like, must be inserted within the groove to prevent the lateral displacement of the glass pane. Therefore, rather than a tight fit or a gripping type cooperation of the glass by the channel walls, Kelley specifically discloses a loose fit with additional means being inserted in the channel.

Applicants' claimed invention has the opposing interior wall surface facing toward and abutting against the opposite glass faces such that gripping contact is achieved. This feature is not disclosed in Kelley. Further, the interior

wall surfaces have a coating which is shearable such that the coating conforms to a shape of the glass face. No such shearable coating is disclosed, taught or suggested by Kelley particularly since only a loose fit is defined therein. Even if some type of coating was provided on the rails of Kelley, the loose fit between the rails and the glass pane would not result in shearing of such a coating.

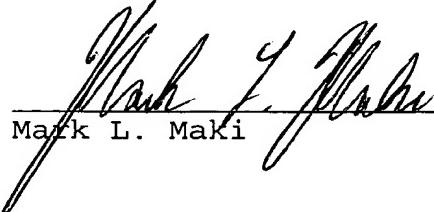
Additionally, the foam strip and pressure sensitive adhesive are believed to be located within the channel in a location which cooperates with the end edges and prevents lateral movement and rattling. Kelley does not disclose, teach or suggest that such foam strips are even applied to the interior faces of the channel walls thereof which face toward the face of the glass pane and further does not disclose, teach or suggest that the foam strips or adhesive undergo any type of shearing through contact with the glass pane. As such, Claim 19 is believed in condition for allowance in addition to Claims 20-23 which depend therefrom.

As to dependent Claim 22, this claim further defines that at least one of the channel walls is resiliently deflectable and is in a deflected position when the glass edge is received within the fixing channel. As discussed above relative to Kelley, only a loose fit is defined between the rigid channel walls of the rails which is believed to therefore indicate that the channel walls of the Kelley patent do not undergo any type of deflection during assembly. Furthermore, based upon an inspection of the drawings in the Figure 22 thereof, the actual structure of the rails is thick which would also suggest to the skilled artisan that no deflection of such thick rail structure would occur and instead the glass pane would likely break if the glass pane was tightly inserted into the channels.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Applicants respectfully submit that all of Claims 1-24 are in condition

for allowance. Further and favorable consideration of this application is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Marked-Up Version of Claim Amendments

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1. (Amended) In an office furniture arrangement having an office furniture component which is positionable in an office area to separate adjacent work areas, said office furniture component including a furniture frame and a glass panel which is supported on said furniture frame while permitting supported thereon which permits viewing through said glass panel, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass defined by a peripheral glass edge and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass panel further including an edge frame having edge rail sections which extends respectively along said glass edges and rigidly supports said glass panel, at least one of said edge rails including an elongate fixing channel which extends parallel to and opens toward said respective glass edge wherein said glass edge is received within said respective fixing channel, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend to define a channel opening that is narrower than a thickness of said glass, said channel walls extending generally parallel to said opposite glass faces, said channel walls and being formed of a rigid material which defines opposing interior wall surfaces that are rigid and contact said opposite glass faces, permits at least one of said channel walls to be being resiliently deflectable upon as to be deflected by insertion of said respective glass edge therein while in said channel opening wherein said glass edge is in tight-fitting gripping contact with said deflectable channel wall and the other of said channel walls.

2. (Amended) The office furniture arrangement according to Claim 1, wherein In an office furniture

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arrangement having an office furniture component which is positionable in an office area to separate adjacent work areas, said office furniture component including a glass panel supported thereon so as to permit viewing through said glass panel, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass defined by glass edges and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass panel further including an edge frame having edge rail sections which extend respectively along said glass edges, at least one of said edge rails including an elongate fixing channel which extends parallel to and opens toward said respective glass edge wherein said glass edge is received within said respective fixing channel, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend generally parallel to said opposite glass faces, said channel walls being formed of a rigid material which permits at least one of said channel walls to be resiliently deflectable upon insertion of said respective glass edge therein while said glass edge is in tight-fitting gripping contact with said deflectable channel wall and the other of said channel walls, each said deflectable channel wall includes including a projection proximate a distal end thereof wherein said projection contacts an opposing one of said glass faces.

6. (Amended) The office furniture arrangement according to Claim 1, wherein In an office furniture arrangement having an office furniture component which is positionable in an office area to separate adjacent work areas, said office furniture component including a glass panel supported thereon so as to permit viewing through said glass panel, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass defined by glass

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edges and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass panel further including an edge frame having edge rail sections which extend respectively along said glass edges, at least one of said edge rails including an elongate fixing channel which extends parallel to and opens toward said respective glass edge wherein said glass edge is received within said respective fixing channel, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend generally parallel to said opposite glass faces, said channel walls being formed of a rigid material which permits at least one of said channel walls to be resiliently deflectable upon insertion of said respective glass edge therein while said glass edge is in tight-fitting gripping contact with said deflectable channel wall and the other of said channel walls, said deflectable channel wall and said other channel wall are being joined together by a side wall of said edge rail, said edge rail having undercuts formed in said side wall proximate a juncture defined between said deflectable channel wall and said side wall.

15. (Amended) The wall panel according to Claim 14, wherein In a space-dividing wall panel having a frame that defines a periphery of said wall panel, said wall panel further including a glass panel which is supported on said frame, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass having glass edges extending about the periphery thereof and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass edges being arranged in substantially parallel edge pairs disposed on opposite sides of said glass, said glass panel further including an edge frame comprising a plurality of edge rails joined together which said edge ..

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frame is joined to said glass to support said glass edges, said glass edges of at least one of said edge pairs being supported within fixing channels defined within a corresponding pair of said edge rails, each said fixing channel extending parallel to a respective one of said glass edges and opening toward said respective glass edge to tight-fittingly receive said respective glass edge therein, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend generally parallel to said opposite glass faces, said channel walls having opposing interior wall surfaces which are normally spaced apart a distance less than a thickness of said glass wherein at least one of said channel walls deflects outwardly upon insertion of said respective glass edge within said respective fixing channel, said deflectable channel wall ~~is being~~ spaced outwardly of said opposing glass face and includes~~including~~ a projection which projects toward said respective glass face and spans said space therebetween so as to contact said opposing glass face, said glass edge being disposed in gripping contact between said projection and an opposing one of said interior wall surfaces.

16. (Amended) The wall panel according to Claim 14, wherein ~~In a space-dividing wall panel having a frame that defines a periphery of said wall panel, said wall panel further including a glass panel which is supported on said frame, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass having glass edges extending about the periphery thereof and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass edges being arranged in substantially parallel edge pairs disposed on opposite sides of said glass, said glass panel further including an edge frame comprising a~~

plurality of edge rails joined together which said edge frame is joined to said glass to support said glass edges, said glass edges of at least one of said edge pairs being supported within fixing channels defined within a corresponding pair of said edge rails, each said fixing channel extending parallel to a respective one of said glass edges and opening toward said respective glass edge to tight-fittingly receive said respective glass edge therein, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend generally parallel to said opposite glass faces, said channel walls having opposing interior wall surfaces which are normally spaced apart a distance less than a thickness of said glass wherein at least one of said channel walls deflects outwardly upon insertion of said respective glass edge within said respective fixing channel, each said fixing channel ~~having~~ having an interior end face against which said glass edge abuts when disposed within said fixing channel, said channel end face including undercuts adjacent said deflectable channel wall so that the other of said channel walls extends away from said channel end face to a height which is less than a height of said deflectable channel wall.

X 19. (Amended) In an office furniture arrangement having an office furniture component which is positionable in an office area to separate adjacent work areas, said office furniture component including a furniture frame and a glass panel which is supported on ~~said furniture framethereon~~, comprising the improvement wherein said glass panel comprises a sheet of glass having glass edges extending about the periphery thereof and opposite faces extending between said glass edges, said glass panel further including an edge frame

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comprising a plurality of edge rails which said edge frame is joined to said glass to support said glass edges, at least one of said edge rails including an elongate fixing channel which extends parallel to a respective one of said glass edges and opens toward said respective glass edge to tight-fittingly receive said respective glass edge therein, each said fixing channel including opposite channel walls which are spaced apart and extend generally parallel to said opposite glass faces wherein said channel walls have opposing interior wall surfaces which face toward and abut against both of said opposite glass faces, at least one of said interior wall surfaces further including a coating thereon which is shearable by said glass edge upon insertion of said glass edge into said respective fixing channel such that said coating conforms to a shape of said glass face and said channel walls are in gripping contact with said ~~glass edge is in gripping contact with said channel walls.~~